

CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A chimeric sub-genomic viral replicon capable of stably replicating in a human liver cell comprising:

(a) a replicon backbone from HCV strain BB7;

(b) a nucleic acid construct encoding chimeric at least one HCV nonstructural proteins from a strain other than BB7; and

(~~b~~) (c) an a nucleic acid encoding an NS5B polymerase gene; and

(d) an HCV 3'NTR.

wherein at least a portion of the NS5B polymerase and the HCV 3'NTR are from the same HCV strain.

2. (currently amended) A replicon of claim 1 comprising at least one chimeric HCV nonstructural protein comprising a portion of a nonstructural protein from a strain of HCV and a portion of a nonstructural protein from a different strain of HCV ~~wherein the NS5B polymerase gene is from an HCV strain and linked in cis to a 3'UTR from said strain.~~ (portion language page 10, beginning in the first full paragraph)

3. (currently amended) A replicon of claim 1 wherein the chimeric nonstructural protein[[s]] comprises a protein selected from the group consisting of NS3, NS4A, NS4B, NS5A, and NS5B.

4. (previously presented) A replicon of claim 1 comprising an NS3 nucleotide sequence that encodes the first 75 contiguous N-terminal amino acids of the NS3 of genotype 1b, of a BB7 strain.

5. (previously presented) A replicon of claim 1 wherein the NS3 N-terminal nucleotide sequence comprises
ATGGCGCCTATTACGGCCTACTCCCAACAGACGCGAGGCCTACTTGG
CTGCATCATCACTAGCCTCACAGGCCGGGACAGGAACCAGGTCTGAGG

GGGAGGTCCAAGTGGTCTCCACCGCAACACAATCTTTCCTGGCGACC
TGC GTCAATGGCGTGTGTTGGACTGTCTATCATGGTGCCGGCTCAAAG
ACCCTTGCCGGCCCCAAAGGGCCCAATCACCCAAATG [SEQ ID NO:1].

6. (original) A replicon of claim 4 wherein said NS3 N-terminal nucleotide sequence replaces the N-terminal first 225 nucleotides of an NS3 from any of six major HCV genotypes selected from the group consisting of HCV genotype 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

7. (original) A replicon of claim 6 wherein the NS3 is from HCV genotype 1a.

8. (original) A replicon of claim 7 wherein the HCV genotype 1a is from an H77 strain.

9. - 13. (cancelled)

14. (currently amended) A replicon of claim ~~[[13]]~~6 wherein the NS3 is from HCV genotype 1b.

15. (original) A replicon of claim 14 wherein the NS3, genotype 1b, is from a J4 strain.

16. (currently amended) A ~~sub-genomic viral replicon~~ of claim 1 comprising SEQ ID NO:2, ~~SEQ ID NO:6~~, SEQ ID NO:7, or SEQ ID NO:8.

17. (withdrawn and currently amended) A method of generating a cell comprising a replicating chimeric sub-genomic viral replicon, said method comprising introducing ~~the said~~ chimeric replicon of claim 1 into a cell.

18. (currently amended) A cell comprising ~~a replicating the~~ chimeric sub-genomic viral replicon of claim 1.

19. (original) The cell of claim 18 wherein the HCV sub-genomic replicon comprises all of the non-structural HCV genes and none of the structural HCV genes.

20. (withdrawn) A method of screening for compounds that modulate viral replication comprising the steps of:

- a) administering a test compound to a cell of claims 18,
and
- b) determining whether said test compound modulates the replication of said chimeric replicon.

21. (withdrawn) A method of screening for compounds that inhibit viral replication comprising the steps of

- a) administering a test compound to a cell of claim 18, and
- b) determining whether said test compound inhibits the replication of said chimeric sub-genomic viral replicon.